



WHAT WE DO CHANGES  
**THE WORLD**

**topeka zoo** 2023 ANNUAL REPORT,  
& conservation center

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Our Mission is to enrich our community through wildlife **conservation and education.**

# HEY FRIENDS,

2023 was another amazing year at your Topeka Zoo! Throughout our 90th year, we continued to make significant strides in conservation efforts, education, and community engagement. We couldn't have done this without our dedicated staff and passionate stakeholders, like you!

Speaking of staff, we would like to acknowledge the departure of Brendan Wiley, who made invaluable contributions to our zoo during his tenure as our CEO. He was instrumental in shaping the vision and direction of our zoo, and his leadership will be deeply missed. On behalf of all of us, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to Brendan for his dedication, passion, and unwavering commitment to the conservation of wildlife and the enrichment of our community.

We are pleased to share that we have recently appointed a new CEO who will lead the Topeka Zoo into its next chapter of growth and innovation. Dr. Christina Castellano joins us with a wealth of experience and a deep-rooted passion for wildlife conservation. She brings a fresh perspective, strategic vision, and proven leadership qualities that will undoubtedly propel our zoo forward on its mission.

Looking forward, we are excited about the opportunities that lie before us and am confident that the Topeka Zoo will continue to thrive and inspire generations to come. Together, we will continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of both animals and people alike. Thanks for your support of our Topeka Zoo!

Sincerely,

**Fred Patton**

President, Board of Directors



ACCREDITED BY THE  
**ASSOCIATION  
OF ZOOS &  
AQUARIUMS**



MEMBER of  
World Association of  
Zoos and Aquariums  
**WAZA** | *United for  
Conservation*

**SAFE**  
SAVING ANIMALS  
FROM EXTINCTION



# 2023

## By the Numbers

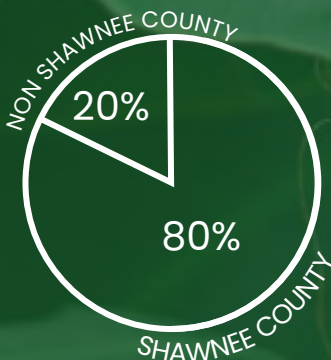


**Total Attendance**  
255,757



Visitors from all 50 States

**Ticketed Attendance**



**Attendance Breakdown**

**57% ADULTS**  
**37% CHILDREN**  
**3% SENIOR**  
**1% UNDER TWO**

**Voted #1 Family Entertainment in Topeka**



**Total Household Memberships**

**5,193**

**Social Following**

**f FACEBOOK 55K**

**📷 INSTAGRAM 16.1K**

**🎵 TIKTOK 30.6K**

**Mission Statement**

To enrich the community through wildlife conservation and education.

**Vision Statement**

We believe what we do changes the world. Every choice we make helps save the planet.

**DEAI Statement**

We are committed to ensuring everyone feels welcome and valued by striving to create an environment that is as diverse as the wild spaces we are trying to protect.

### Financials

SPECIAL EVENTS & PROMOTIONS	\$961,093.42
MEMBERSHIPS	\$489,519.95
CONSERVATION	\$44,898.68
ADMISSION REVENUE	\$815,510.99
ZOO EXPERIENCES & RENTALS	\$190,093.42
CONCESSIONS	\$166,455.09
RETAIL REVENUE	\$301,770.76
ZOO EDUCATION	\$142,777.34



# Events at the Zoo



**1,200**

Roar and Pour attendees



**EIGHT**

artist-animal collaborations



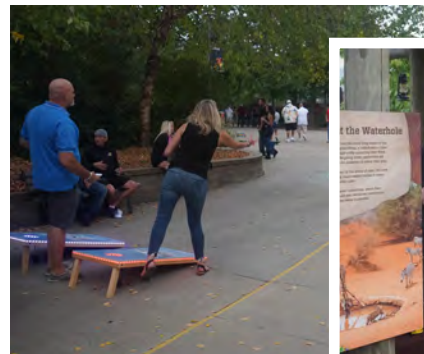
**2,000**

tickets sold for Brew at the Zoo



**THIRTY**

breweries served 100 beers




## Digital Reach During Zoo Lights

November 17 through December 30

 **1.5 million** social media impressions

 **700+** new followers on Instagram and Facebook

 **55,991** total visitors



# AZA Accreditation

In September 2023, the Topeka Zoo & Conservation Center earned its 5-year accreditation from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). This recognition emphasizes the zoo's commitment to upholding the highest standards of animal care and welfare. The accreditation process involves thorough peer review within the zoo followed by evaluation by a panel to ensure compliance with AZA's guidelines. Notably, accreditation is not merely renewed but reapplied for every five years, reflecting the continuous dedication of the Topeka Zoo to maintaining and elevating its standards of excellence in animal care and conservation.



## Giraffe & Friends

The Giraffe & Friends habitat debuted on March 10, 2023, featuring a diverse array of animals including reticulated giraffe, bontebok, lesser kudu, gray crowned crane, ostrich and Thomson's gazelle. Creating a mixed species savannah habitat.

These animals received a new home in a modern 10,000 square foot Giraffe Building and a 3,000 square foot hoofstock and bird barn. These new facilities provide modern amenities for the health and well-being of our herd, including a giant indoor giraffe playroom, maternity room, training-suite, and both an indoor/outdoor feeding platform.

Giraffe & Friends stretches from the Kay McFarland

Japanese Garden all the way around Camp Cowabunga, completing the safari experience.



# ANIMAL CARE

Our animal care team consists of a veterinarian, a veterinary technician, curators, supervisors and zookeepers. Together, they lead and participate in initiatives focusing on population sustainability, nutrition, emerging diseases, behavior, and enrichment and training programs. Our animal care experts provide meaningful habitats in a safe environment, captivating presentations and animal enrichment programs that stimulate the animals' minds through cognitive and sensory enrichment.

## IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE

Our elderly animals need some extra care from everyone at the zoo. We help our aging animals by keeping close contact with the veterinarian staff, providing special diets and food regimens to meet their specific needs, administering pain medications, fluids, laser therapy, and ointments to improve their quality of life. The care provided to our animals helps prevent the early death of those most likely to die in their natural habitat. Animals are kept in a protective environment and provided with food and top quality veterinary care.



**HOGO** MALAYAN SUN BEAR  
Life Expectancy: 23 Current Age: 34



**CORA** ASIAN ELEPHANT  
Life Expectancy: 47 Current Age: 65



**GERTIE** LLAMA  
Life Expectancy: 18 Current Age: 27



**JACKIE** Hoffmann's 2 Toed Sloth  
Life Expectancy: 52 Current Age: 33



**ASANTE** AFRICAN LION  
Life Expectancy: 17 Current Age: 20



**TEMBO** AFRICAN ELEPHANT  
Life Expectancy: 39 Current Age: 53



**ERIN** SOUTHERN BANDED ARMADILLO  
Life Expectancy: 17 Current Age: 21



**ALBERT** NORTH AMERICAN RIVER OTTER  
Life Expectancy: 12 Current Age: 15



**MAWAS** Bornean Orangutan  
Life Expectancy: 28 Current Age: 35



**CASSIE** COUGAR  
Life Expectancy: 9 Current Age: 16



**EMMA** PATAS MONKEY  
Life Expectancy: 15 Current Age: 16



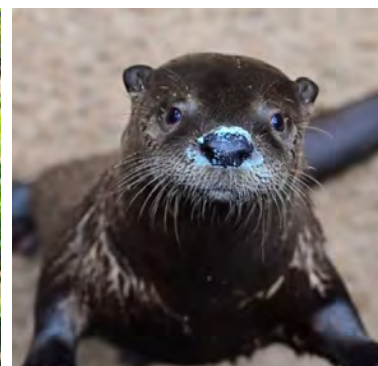
**MOE** Greater Malayan Chevrotain  
Life Expectancy: 7 Current Age: 9



**WINNIE** PATAS MONKEY  
Life Expectancy: 15 Current Age: 18



**SPIKE** Cape Porcupine  
Life Expectancy: 15 Current Age: 21







## NEW ANIMALS IN 2023

- Bontebok: Monty
- Ostrich: Karen
- lesser kudu: Lemmy and Sudi
- African Lion: Tatu
- North American River Otters: Bruce and Crush
- Bornean Orangutan: Kali
- Reticulated Giraffe: Daisy
- Sumatran Tigers: Thomas and Nisha
- Thomson’s Gazelle: Haraka and Tsavo
- Virginia Opossum: Violet

## ANIMALS THAT LEFT IN 2023

### DEATHS

- African Lion: Avus
- Golden Eagle: Chockey
- Black and White Ruffed Lemur: Cleo

### TRANSFERS

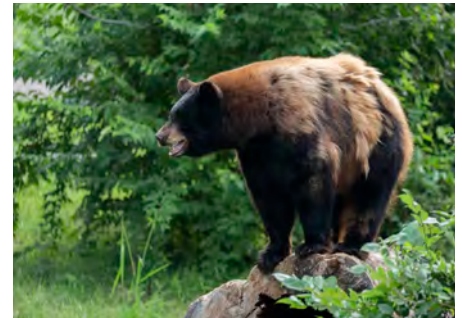
- Black and White Ruffed Lemur: Sorabe
- Golden Lion Tamarin: Mora
- Dik-dik: Krackle
- Hoffmann’s sloth: Sago
- Hoffmann’s sloth: Almond

# VETERINARY CARE

You can’t ask animals questions about how they’re feeling, so in order to know what’s abnormal, you have to know what’s normal. That’s where our zoo veterinarian Dr. Shirley Llizo comes in. “Doc” as we like to call her, has served as our Director of Animal Health since 2006. Responsible for the medical care of all of the animals here at the zoo, her knowledge includes internal medicine, dermatology, neurology, obstetrics-gynecology, hematology, urology, allergies, diagnostic radiology, nutrition, pharmacology, parasitology, dentistry, anesthesiology, surgery and more.

Every day brings a different experience to Doc and the keepers. One of the most challenging aspects of veterinary care at the Zoo is working with geriatric animals and ensuring they can carry out basic functions while remaining comfortable. Pain management tops the list of Doc’s geriatric care goals, and thanks to advanced technology and her expertise, efforts to make sure our animals have a fabulous life while they are here have been successful.

The Zoo is home to numerous geriatric animals who have a special place in our hearts. Our elderly animals need some extra care from everyone at the zoo. We help our aging animals by providing special diets and food regimens to meet their specific needs, administering pain medications, fluids, laser therapy, and ointments to extend and improve their quality of life.



# CONSERVATION

## What is Conservation?

A major threat to the environment and ecosystem is the extinction of different species of animals across the world. This includes Sumatran tigers, Asian elephants, giraffes, and orangutans among several others. There are several contributing factors to the extinction of these species including habitat damage, deforestation, water pollution, and the mass use of single-use plastics.

It is our top priority to take proper measures to address these issues to save our planet. Part of these measures include enormous investments of resources and funds and partnering with several organizations that share our values to achieve our goals.



## Conservation in Action



**2,336** plants sold



**52** manhole covers painted



**43** Salt Creek tiger beetles released



**188** monarch butterflies tagged



**118,000** conservation funds raised

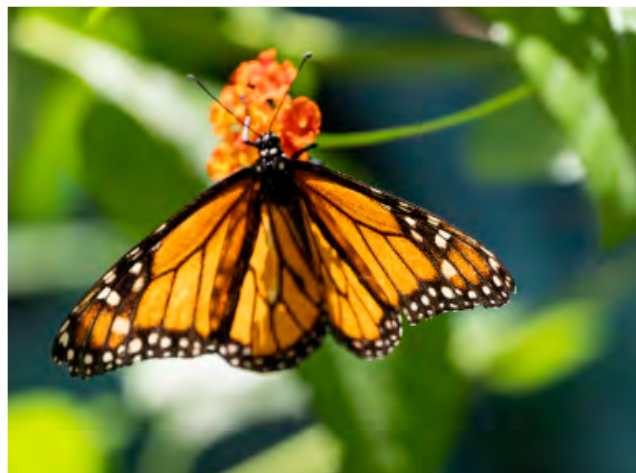
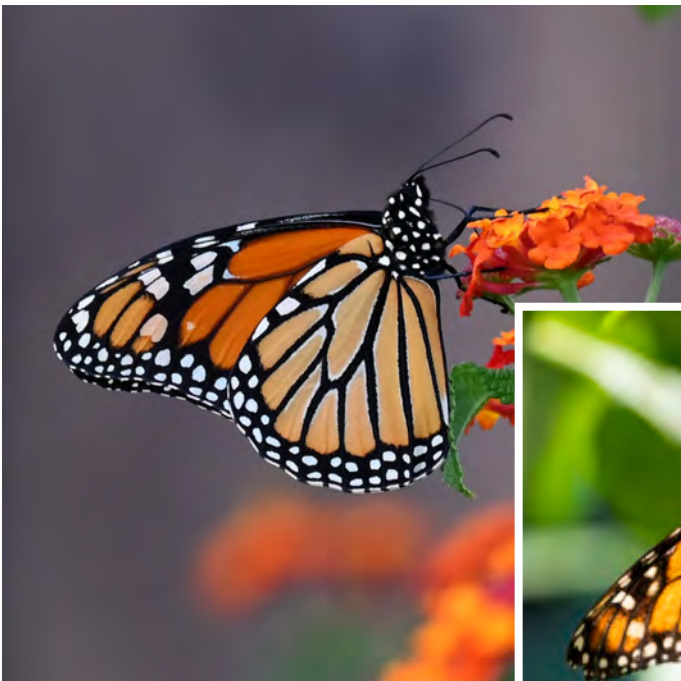
# Monarch Butterflies

Monarch butterflies are essential to the ecosystem as they pollinate various plants vital to human life and wildlife.

We have taken several steps to promote the conservation of Monarch Butterflies, including creating 14 butterfly beds that cover 6,383 square feet. These beds offer monarchs milkweed, an important source for Monarchs to lay eggs, reproduce, and attract and support pollinators.

In addition, we host an annual conservative initiative, "Monarch Butterfly Migration", teaming with the Kansas Museum of History. This free class for the public teaches the importance of monarchs, the current issues they face and how to catch them.

A major goal of this program is to educate participants on the importance of milkweed and how it impacts monarchs. This program is open to all ages, with the hope of reaching sectors of the audience who will plant milkweed for the monarchs so they can lay eggs and reproduce.



## Ornate Box Turtles

We are proud to have been part of important legislation passed in 2023 that set limits on the number of box turtles and other reptiles and amphibians licensed hunters are allowed to pick up when hunting.

Together with State Legislators and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, the Topeka Zoo & Conservation Center achieved a milestone conservation effort to protect these species.

In addition to the regulations, we have worked with advocacy groups to educate the public about the harms of writing on or carving the turtles' shells. The sale of Box Turtles and their shells creates a major dilemma for conservation efforts.

# SALT CREEK TIGER BEETLES

Since 2019, we have partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the Lincoln Children's Zoo and Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium on a conservation project for the Salt Creek Tiger Beetle.

The Salt Creek Tiger Beetle is one of the **most critically endangered insects** in North America with only a couple hundred at most left in the wild. These beetles only reside in Lancaster County in Nebraska where they are specifically adapted to a salty marshland environment that is the saline wetlands.

We usually take anywhere from 60-90 freshly hatched beetle larvae in July and raise them to be released back into their native habitat.

We take them to Lincoln, Nebraska, and **release them into a protected site** to have them sync up with the wild population. That



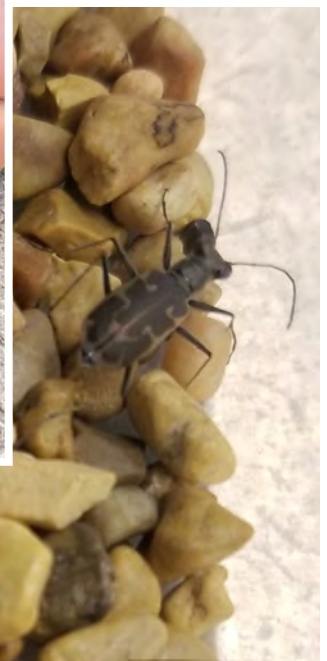
will thus increase the number of individuals there, hopefully encourage more breeding, and get more beetles in that area.

We released approximately 45 beetle larvae in April and hope to double that number next year.

## small but MIGHTY

The conservation of the **Salt Creek Tiger Beetle** is important for many reasons, but mainly because local conservation efforts are a driving force behind our mission and vision. We strongly support international conservation efforts, but we also believe in supporting local conservation initiatives like these tiger beetles.

There are many different species of tiger beetles that exist, they're an indicator species! Which means a low population of tiger beetles indicates a possible threat to an environment. The beetle itself is vital to every ecosystem. Without them, flora and fauna in the area can't survive. It's the little things that count!



# TAKING CARE OF ENDANGERED SPECIES



## ELEPHANT

Our zoo is home to both an African Elephant, Tembo, 53 and an Asian Elephant, Cora, 65. Both species of elephants are classified as endangered, with only an estimated 415,000 African elephants and less than 50,000 Asian Elephants in the world. By far the biggest threat to both African and Asian elephants is poaching for their trunks and their tusks.



## TIGER

As part of the Species Survival Plan, we were excited to welcome two new Sumatran Tigers to their new home at the Topeka Zoo last year. We hope to build on our past success in breeding Sumatran Tigers to help save this critically endangered species that only has 400 left in the wild.



## GIRAFFE

The largest habitat in the zoo's history is home to three female reticulated giraffe, Hope, Liz, Daisy and a male reticulated giraffe, Sarge. The facilities include a giant indoor giraffe playroom, maternity room, training suite, and both an indoor and outdoor feeding platform.



## ORANGUTAN

Our Bornean Orangutan family group includes Mawas, 34, Rudy, 37, Kali, 14, juvenile Bumi, 10, and baby Udara, who will turn 2 on May 7. The destruction and degradation of the tropical rain forest, particularly lowland forest, in Borneo and Sumatra is the main reason orangutans are threatened with extinction. During the past decade orangutan populations have decreased by 50% in the wild.

# SUSTAINABILITY

Here at the Topeka Zoo, we are apart of a larger community that shares common values and goals for protecting endangered species and their habitats. We take part of a global initiative and implement large plans from the United Nations' Strategic Goals to reduce the threat of extinction, which threatens the entire world.



## Reduce the Purchase of Single-Use Plastics

Plastic garbage contains chemicals capable of creating massive habitat damage, poisoning the water animals drink and entangling several animals at sea.

At the Topeka Zoo, we lead by example.

- The Cafe now uses **aluminum cups and cans** of water instead of plastic bottles.
- Moving toward **only selling materials from recycled content** in the gift shop.
- Model proper recycling and implement a policy to purchase only material used from **sustainable practices with non-hazardous materials**.

## Promote Water Conservation

Measures we have taken to reduce water waste and promote conservation here include:

- Advocating for a city ordinance to conserve water.
- Promoting water conservation on an individual level.
- Celebrating World Water Day and World Rivers Day with booths around the Zoo with educational messages about conservation.
- Filtering toxins out of water before they leave the Zoo.
- **Waterways Protection Program**, sponsoring boat ramps for people to get on and off the river safely.





## Fighting Food Insecurity

Food insecurity impacts nearly 30% of the world's population. We understand that before people can be educated about the importance of sustainability and conservation of animals, their own hunger must be addressed. We work with the following to alleviate hunger in our own backyard:

- Partner with **Project Topeka**, which provides food for seven food distribution banks
- Exchange cans of food for popcorn on Earth Day
- Partner with **Harvesters** for donations to address conservation and food insecurity at concession stands and gift shops.
- Food drives, an event where guests can pay for admission by cans of food.



## Strategic Plan Initiatives

1 Slow the Threat of Extinction

2 Reduce the Effects of Plastic on the Environment

3 Ensure Food Availability for the Future

4 Create Respect and Empathy for Water Conservation

5 Be a Pipeline to Solutions

# LEARNING & ENGAGEMENT

In our ongoing mission to foster conservation awareness among younger generations, our camps and educational programs play a pivotal role.

Our summer camp immerses kids in the world of zookeeping, allowing them to experience the daily life and responsibilities of a Topeka zookeeper. Through hands-on activities and engaging discussions, we instill values of sustainability, conservation, and empathy for endangered species. Catering to various age groups, we ensure that each camper receives tailored education on topics ranging from species extinction to ecosystem dynamics.

**Hunter Mangel**, our dedicated Education Program Manager, brings a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm to our team. With a background in fisheries, wildlife, and anthrozoology, Hunter is uniquely positioned to connect with young audiences and deliver impactful lessons on ecosystems, conservation, and sustainability. She understands the importance of finding relatable ways to convey complex concepts, whether it's using the state reptile, box turtles, as a starting point or tapping into children's interests to spark curiosity about endangered species thousands of miles away.

Hunter's passion for education is evident in her approach to camp programming. She works



tirelessly to create engaging and informative experiences for campers of all ages, ensuring that each session meets educational standards while remaining flexible and fluent. Her efforts have contributed to high camper return rates, as children eagerly anticipate the opportunity to learn and explore at the Topeka Zoo each summer.

Beyond the fulfillment she finds in her role, Hunter is inspired by the meaningful connections formed among campers and staff members alike. By providing children with the tools and knowledge to make a positive impact on the world around them, she believes that we can empower the next generation of conservationists and environmental stewards. Together, we are working towards a future where endangered species are protected, ecosystems thrive, and the values of conservation are upheld."

Looking for the best mix of education and adventure? Check out programs [topekazoo.org/education](https://topekazoo.org/education).



education  
program  
attendees

7,954  
Zoo 2 U

+

720  
camps

+

4,816  
on-site



**“There is no conservation without education.”**  
– Education Program Manager, **Hunter Mangel**

The Topeka Zoo has one of the best education programs in Northeast Kansas, with nationally-recognized educators and STEAM-based curriculum designed to engage, inspire, and empower the next generation of conservation-minded citizens. These year-round activities connect students to wildlife and wild places by giving them the opportunity to discover animals, habitats, and conservation through engaging programs with Zoo educators. Our goal is to develop the future leaders, environmental advocates, and community stewards to create a sustainable world for people to inhabit and species to thrive for many years to come.



# OUR PEOPLE

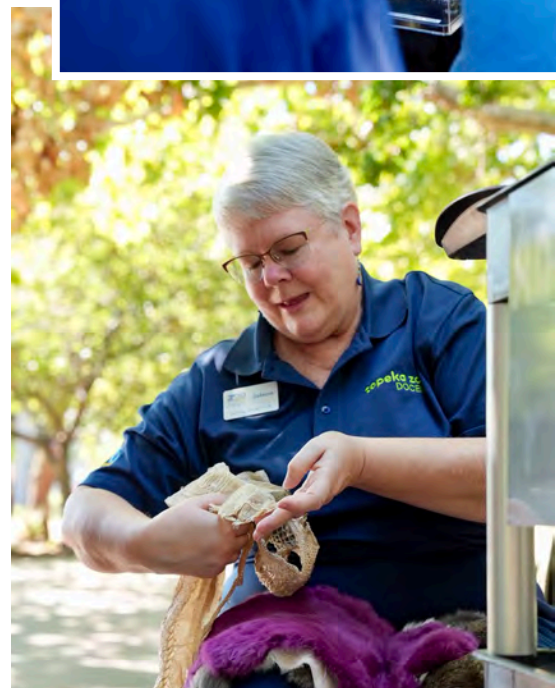
## DOCENTS

The Topeka Zoo Docent Program began in 1967. It has a long history of representing the zoo with professional interpretations of our animals and events.

### What is a Docent?

Docents are volunteers who receive extensive training on Zoo procedures and Zoo animals. Docents play an important role in the education of our community while they act as teachers and interpreters throughout the Zoo. Everything our docents do connects people to nature through unique learning experiences that engage their thoughts and touch their hearts.

Docents provide educational and hands-on opportunities at Discovery Stations around the Zoo, offer live animal encounters, provide Interpretation of Zoo animals at their exhibit window, handle education animals and animal artifacts, act as Zoo guides for groups visiting the Zoo, act as ambassadors at the Zoo at special events, and more!



117

docents in 2023

11,024

volunteer hours in 2023

59,082

volunteer hours in the  
past seven years



# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

**Your support makes  
the difference.**

On behalf of our beloved zoo, we wish to express our gratitude for your generous support. Your contributions help us to continue our conservation efforts, provide memorable experiences for visitors and ensure the well-being of our animals.

Your commitment to our mission strengthens the Topeka community and inspires us every day.



## Individual Donors

Roger and Robyn Aeschliman  
Martin and Shari Albrecht  
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Ken and Pamela Alexander  
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Kathryn Arbuckle-Higdon  
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Drew Hulett and Josephine Salzer  
Cynthia Irigonegaray  
Holly Johnson  
Nicole Johnson

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## Lon and Nancy Lewis Members, Donors and Advocates

“ We are very proud of the Topeka Zoo for being the World Famous Topeka Zoo, its scientific emphasis, conservation of wildlife and the environment... through its educational programs, all of us are enriched. Persons of all ages enjoy the zoo and it attracts persons from around the state and beyond. ”

Tyler Johnson and Michelle Butler  
James Jones  
Ted and Terri Jowett  
Michael Juarez and Nicole Ortiz  
Nick and Andrea Kaberline  
Kyle Kaberline  
Keith and Tam Karlan  
Nancy Kassebaum  
Kelly and April Kelsey  
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Carol Trahan  
Roger and Joanie Underwood  
Joe and Cinda Vining  
Nathan and Jolene Walker  
Neil and Janet Weatherhogg  
Marlou Wegener  
Bob and Opal Wheeler  
Michael and Kimberly White  
Monica Wieners Daniel  
Jannett Wiens

## Pam Alexander

### "My World" Cabinet Member

“ The zoo is special to me because I have so many memories of trips to the zoo with my family for many, many years! The interaction with the animals is so fun and to experience the evolution of the zoo over the years has been incredible. The Topeka Zoo is innovative, exciting, fun, subversive and educational! ”

Stanley Wilch  
Tyler Willis and Rebecca Johnson  
Mike and Maria Wilson  
Stanley and Claudia Wilson  
Mark Winters  
Larry and Anita Wolgast  
Corrie Wright  
Mark and Theresa Young

## **Community, Corporate & Foundation Donors**

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FM, 92.9 the Bull  
Happy Basset Brewing Co.  
Harris Fabrication  
Hill's Pet Nutrition, Inc.  
Kansas State Union Label and  
Service Trades Council  
Kaw Valley Bank  
KBS Constructors, Inc.  
Kendall Construction  
KSNT-TV  
KTWU Public Television  
Lamar Advertising of Topeka  
Lasting Legacy Online, LLC.  
Latta-Whitlow, LLC.  
Lewis H. Humphreys  
Charitable Trust  
Love's Travel Stops &  
Country Stores  
Lower Plumbing, Heating and  
Air Conditioning  
Mainline Printing, Inc.  
Mars  
McCray Lumber Company  
McDonald's  
Michel Dental  
Mohan Construction  
Moore, Southwest Publishing  
Division  
Oleander Café  
PKMR Engineers  
Polo Custom Products  
ppB Enviro-Solutions  
Premier Farm & Home  
Premier One  
Professional Engineering  
Consultants  
R&S Maintenance Services, Inc.

Reser's Fine Foods  
Residence Inn Topeka  
Schendel Lawn and Landscape  
Schendel Pest Services  
Schmidtlein Excavating, Inc.  
Schwartz Family Foundation  
Schwerdt Design Group, Inc.  
Scott Human Resources  
Security Benefit  
Silver Lake Bank  
Smokin G's  
Spring Hill Suites by Marriott  
Squeegee Squad - Kansas Central  
State Farm Insurance  
- Brandon Aldridge  
State of Nebraska  
TARC  
Target Distribution Center, T3803  
The Laird Noller Companies  
Thrivent Financial  
Topeka Audubon Society  
Topeka Community Foundation  
Topeka Frontier Self Storage  
Topeka Tree Care  
Torgeson Electric Company  
Torgeson Trenching Services, Inc.  
University of Kansas Health  
Systems St. Francis Urgent Care  
Vaughn Pediatric Dentistry  
Walmart  
Waste Management  
WIBW  
Yellow Bug



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